

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2011 AT COMMITTEE ROOMS B-D, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM.

Present:

Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Mr N Owen, Mrs R Ryan, Cllr Carole Soden and Dr M Thompson

Also Present:

Cllr Lionel Grundy and Cllr Alan Macrae

209. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Helen Osborn and Mrs Di Dale.

210. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 September 2011.

211. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

212. **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

213. **Public Participation and Councillors Questions**

There were no members of the public present or councillors' questions.

214. **Preventing Children and Young People from entering the care system**

Consideration was given to a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director which outlined the work being undertaken to prevent children and young people from entering the care system and assisting with a return home where appropriate.

The Chairman reported that following the Committee's response to the 11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy consultation, as agreed at its meeting on 22 July 2011, Cllr Mary Douglas had noticed that a point she had raised at the meeting had not been recorded in the minutes. However, the missing point was added to the Committee's response to the consultation which was to highlight Corporate Priority No 6 within the Strategy, which was "To reduce the number of young people who are unable to live with their families i.e. numbers of 13 to 18s in care."

It was noted that the number of children in care had peaked at 404 in July 2011 but had since declined somewhat each month to current total of 383. The Committee members were informed that work was regularly undertaken to understand trends and patterns and the reasons why children and young people entered care. This work included:-

- An audit of all children and young people who came into the care system for the six month period from December 2010 to June 2011.
- An audit of a sample of cases where children and young people were looked after under Section 20 (voluntarily accommodated) rather than through Care Orders.

Both these audits found that there were two main groups of children and young people entering the care system, being:-

- Under 3 year olds where there were child protection concerns.
- Over 13 year olds where relationships within the family had broken down.

Final reports on the two audits would be presented to the Children in Care Commissioning Group in December 2011 whose recommendations would inform the final Children in Care Commissioning Strategy for 2012 to 2015.

As part of the review of the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy, work was also being undertaken on a detailed analysis of historic patterns and trends on

children in care placements to ensure that any change to anticipated demand was picked up early.

During October, Wiltshire became one of 50 local authorities in the second phase of the national Community Budgets pilots focusing on families with multiple needs. The scope of the project was being finalised but it would include a focus on increasing the number of children and young people remaining with their families. The project would have a multi-agency focus, including links with adult services, particularly around substance misusing parents and those with mental health problems, and also have a particular focus on earlier intervention.

During discussion, Members recognised the amount of excellent work that was being undertaken and expressed their appreciation.

However, it was noted that there was no mention of work being undertaken with the voluntary sector. It was explained that there was close collaboration with the Voluntary Sector Forum, including participation in Action for Children, a national charity which supported and spoke out for the UK's most vulnerable and neglected children and young people.

Members enquired as to the number of children and young people requiring placements as Looked After Children and also the numbers being placed outside Wiltshire. It was noted that the Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group was currently considering the draft Children in Care Commissioning Strategy which would include numbers in care and would submit their report to this Committee in due course.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

215. The future development of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS)

The Committee received a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, which proposed the transformation of education provision for permanently excluded students of secondary school age. The proposal was essentially to close Wiltshire's four YPSS centres in Chippenham, Trowbridge, Devizes and Salisbury and to delegate the responsibility for educating permanently excluded students to secondary schools, which would receive the devolved funding.

The report had been considered by Cabinet on 15 November 2011 which had agreed:-

- 1. That Wiltshire accepts the invitation from the Department for Education to join the Alternative Provision trial and, for a three year period, delegate the*

responsibility for making educational provision for permanently excluded young people to secondary schools, with devolved funding.

2. *That a request is made to the Secretary of State to close the existing Young People's Support Service from 31 August 2012.*
3. *That Secondary schools are supported in using the devolved funding either individually or in groups to provide high quality alternative provision. The Local Authority provides robust quality assurance of the provision.*

It was explained that under the provisions of the Education Bill, schools would be required to take greater responsibility for all students, including those they had previously excluded. To facilitate this new thinking, the DfE had launched a trial which involved participating Local Authorities, including Wiltshire, delegating the responsibility for providing education for permanently excluded young people to their secondary schools. The purpose of the trial was to engage secondary schools in taking greater responsibility for the education of permanently excluded young people.

It was considered that the current position with YPSS and the change-potential offered by the DfE initiative represented a clear opportunity to radically improve the service and the outcomes for the young people it served.

Members welcomed this initiative which they considered would provide a much improved service for young people. However, they did question if school academies would participate in this venture. It was explained that the Education Bill required all types of secondary school to be involved and that all Wiltshire academies were collaborating.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) **To note the content of the report and welcome the trial which was most likely to provide an improved service for young people.**
- (2) **To request a progress report for the meeting of the Select Committee to be held on 29 March 2012.**

216. **Coalition Update - September to November 2011**

The Select Committee received a report by Carolyn Godfrey which provided the following updates on Coalition proposals for children's services and education:-

- Parents to be given new freedoms to run their local children's centres
- Government sets out which two-year-olds will be eligible for free early education

- Review to improve the training and qualifications for people working in the early years
- Free parenting classes
- Revised school admissions and appeals codes
- School funding for vulnerable pupils set to double
- New phonics check
- Behaviour checklist to help teachers maintain discipline in school
- Summer school programme
- Standards and Testing Agency
- Vocational qualifications to be judged against strict new rules
- Consultation on teacher recruitment
- School building regulations
- Proposals to overhaul post-16 education
- Voluntary and community organisations helping children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Academies update
- £11 million to fund new online and telephone family support services
- Local authorities challenged to do better on adoption
- Guidance on safeguarding children who may have been trafficked

Resolved:

To note and welcome the contents of the report.

217. **Budget & Performance Monitoring - DCE**

The Select Committee received a version of the Business Plan Scorecard report presented to Cabinet on 16 November 2011, edited to contain only information pertinent to children and education.

It was noted that there was no Budget revenue monitoring report for this meeting.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report but to request that in future the scorecard results be provided in colour in order to clearly differentiate between the colour coding of the results.

218. **Report of the Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group: Draft Children in Care Commissioning (CiC) Strategy**

The Committee received a report which set out the conclusions and comments of the Placements for LAC Task Group with respect to the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy consultation.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Task Group, explained that this Task Group had originally been established to scrutinise the Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Commissioning Strategy. In January 2011, the Children in Care Commissioning Group, a sub-group of the Wiltshire's Children's Trust's Commissioning Executive, decided to review and update this strategy, agreeing that the new strategy should have a broader focus and cover all services for children in care instead of focusing only on placements.

The draft CiC Commissioning Strategy was out for consultation until 20 January 2012, the purpose of which was to achieve better outcomes for children and young people by making sure there were sufficient services available locally. This would involve ensuring:

- There were services available which prevented children and young people from coming into care and assist with a return home if this was appropriate.
- A good range of high quality services for children in care, including placements (our aim is 'local placements for local children').
- All services were cost effective.

The Placements for LAC Task Group had met to consider the draft CiC Strategy holistically on 14 November 2011 and agreed the conclusions and comments as set out in the report. Cllr Hubbard stated that the meeting had been very positive and that the Task Group would be meeting again after 20 January 2012 to consider the proposals in detail and taking into account representations received during the consultation process.

Cllr Mary Douglas referred to the following commissioning priorities as set out at para. 3 of the Draft Consultation:-

- CP1 Maximising the involvement of children in care and care leavers in the commissioning process
- CP2 Improving understanding of the demand for children in care services
- CP3 Better market and supply management
- CP4 Support for children and young people on the edge of care
- CP5 Ensure children in care assessment and case management pathways are effective
- CP6 Improving range and quality of services for care leavers

She considered CP4 Support for children and young people on the edge of care to be of particular importance and suggested that this priority should be reflected when allocating finance. It was explained that prevention was considered to be most important and a new resource was available for this purpose through the Family Resource Service and Action for Children.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To endorse the comments within the report as this Select Committee's response to the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy consultation.
- (2) To delegate responsibility for scrutinising the final Children in Care Commissioning Strategy to the Placements for LAC Task Group, which would refer its report direct to Cabinet for consideration alongside the Strategy on 16 March 2012.

219. **Task Group update**

The Select Committee received an update on the activity of the following Task Groups:-

- Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group
- Major Contracts Task Group
- Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group
- Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

220. **Forward Work Programme**

The Select Committee received the Forward Work Programme for consideration and comment.

Resolved:

To agree the Forward Work Programme.

221. **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 26 January 2012, starting at 10.30am, to be held at Bradley Road, Trowbridge.

(NOTE: Since this meeting arrangements have been made for the meeting on 26 January 2012 to be held at Monkton Park, Chippenham in Committee Rooms B-D)

222. **Urgent Items**

There were no items of urgent business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line (01225) 713035, e-mail roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115